

Gerontological Nursing Competencies for Entry-Level Professional Nursing

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In 2010, the Hartford Institute for Gerontological Nursing (HIGN) and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) developed and disseminated baccalaureate competencies and curricular guidelines for the nursing care of older adults. The competencies were aligned with the 2008 AACN *Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice*. In 2021, the AACN approved a competency-based approach for professional nursing education that included competencies in 10 domains. Competencies were identified for entry-level professional nursing education and advanced-level nursing education. Focusing on the competencies for entry-level professional nursing education, individuals designated as Distinguished Gerontological Nurse Educators (DEGN) through the National Hartford Center for Gerontological Nursing Excellence (NHCGNE) have developed a new and revised set of gerontological nursing competencies for entry-level professional nursing.¹ These 37 competencies align with *The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education* (AACN, 2021) and are intended to be addressed in entry-level professional nursing programs.

1. Apply relevant theories and concepts from the natural and social sciences to support person-centered care for older adults.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the complex interaction of acute and chronic co-morbid conditions and associated treatments common to older adults.
3. Assess barriers and facilitators for older adults in receiving, understanding, and providing information based on their values and preferences.
4. Conduct assessments using evidence-based geriatric assessment tools to identify and evaluate their physical, functional, emotional, cognitive, and psychosocial needs.
5. Implement interventions to support older adult's physical, functional, emotional, cognitive, psychosocial, cultural, and spiritual needs.
6. Implement evidence-based assessment, prevention, and management strategies for geriatric syndromes.
7. Integrate age-related changes when distinguishing between normal and abnormal assessment findings.
8. Consider the health and well-being of informal and formal carers of older adults when planning and providing person-centered care.
9. Advocate for timely and appropriate respite, palliative, and hospice care to support older adults and their families/carers.
10. Facilitate safe and effective transitions across levels of care and care settings.
11. Utilize resources and programs to promote healthy aging and well-being.
12. Implement evidence-based interventions to reduce risk, prevent illness, and promote healthy aging.
13. Identify interventions and resources to help older adults avoid or minimize the effects of extreme weather and climate change.
14. Evaluate the effectiveness of the evidence-based plan of care in meeting the older adult's needs and preferences and achieving the goals of care.

¹ Baccalaureate nursing programs and entry-level masters programs

15. Advocate for the rights and needs of diverse populations of older adults, including those from marginalized or underserved communities.
16. Advocate for equitable policies, regulations, and guidelines to promote access to equitable health care, and the health, safety, and well-being of older adults
17. Advocate for emergency preparedness in institutions and communities to protect older adults during natural or other disasters and public health or other emergency situations.
18. Evaluate clinical practice related to the care of older adults to generate questions to improve nursing care.
19. Contribute to the ethical conduct of scholarly activities, including quality improvement or evidence-based practice initiatives, related to nursing care of older adults.
20. Evaluate the older adult's living environment to reduce the risk of injury (e.g., falls, medication mismanagement, pressure injuries).
21. Implement quality and safety measures to address the care needs of older adults in diverse communities and settings.
22. Identify actual or suspected abuse (physical, psychological, sexual, financial abuse, and/or neglect) in older adults and report as indicated.
23. Participate in practice changes to improve the quality of nursing care of older adults.
24. Apply strategies to promote age-friendly health systems and communities.
25. Collaborate with interprofessional team members, older adults, and families/carers to promote holistic, person-centered care across settings and during care transitions.
26. Utilize communication tools and techniques to facilitate interprofessional team communication and care coordination that promotes quality care for older adults.
27. Recognize internal and external system structures and processes that impact equitable care coordination and care transitions for older adults.
28. Demonstrate knowledge of the organizational structure and dynamics of healthcare systems where older adults access and receive healthcare services.
29. Identify financial and payment models related to equitable healthcare access and care for older adults.
30. Use performance indicators or metrics specific to older adults that can be compared and monitored across healthcare systems to provide safe, high-quality, and equitable care for older adults.
31. Assess older adults' digital health literacy.
32. Facilitate the use of digital health technologies for older adults and their families/carers to promote and manage health, access healthcare resources, and communicate with healthcare professionals.
33. Demonstrate awareness of self and others' attitudes, values, and expectations about aging and the impact on the care of older adults and their carers.
34. Apply principles of professional nursing practice that promote empathetic, ethical, and compassionate nursing care toward older adults across the continuum of care.
35. Demonstrate support for diversity, equity, and inclusion for older adults and their families/carers.
36. Demonstrate leadership with the health care team that fosters change, innovation, and interdisciplinary collaboration to improve the care of older adults.
37. Engage in reflective practice and continuous learning related to the nursing care of older adults.